

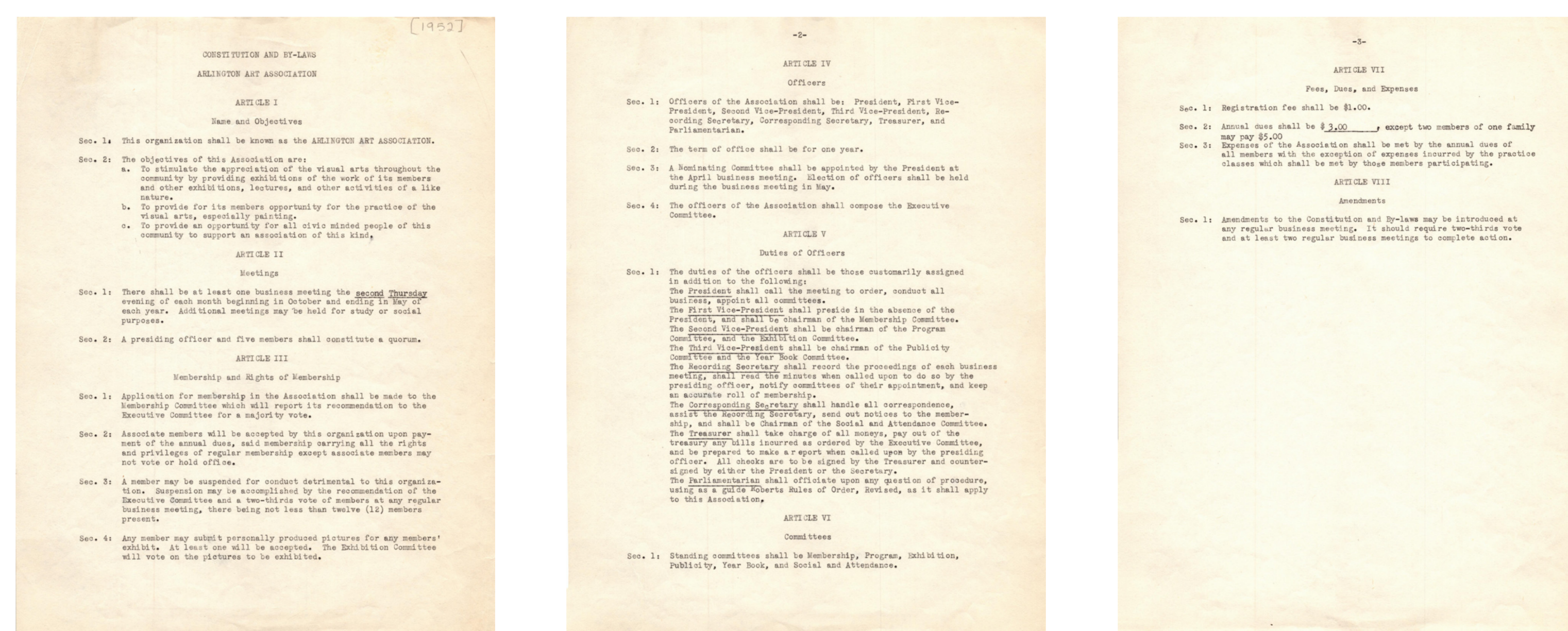
ORIGIN STORY: 1937-1953

THE ARLINGTON ART ASSOCIATION

When Howard Joyner moved to Arlington, Texas in 1937, he was answering the call to start an art program at North Texas Agricultural College (now the University of Texas at Arlington). It wasn't long before Howard and his wife Arista, herself an artist, recognized that their new home town lacked any kind of organized effort to practice art and promote the arts in the community. So in 1939, the creative couple invited a group of new friends to join them in considering the formation of an art association.

Following WWII and by 1952, their on-going conversations paid off and the Arlington Art Association was born. Founded to promote "fine activities, exhibitions, lectures, entertainments, and the like, all of an art nature," the Arlington Art Association envisioned being a "credit to Arlington" in "aiding in no small measure (to) the development of our beloved city by attracting others here."

The Association was prolific and comprehensive in its efforts. By late 1953, it was hosting evening (mostly painting) classes for adults and high school students of all artistic levels. Programming also included lectures, films, exhibits, sidewalk shows, antique exhibits, and eventually, art classes in a variety of mediums.



Original constitution and by-laws of the Arlington Art Association, 1953
courtesy UTA Libraries Special Collections

CREATIVE CIRCLES

THE BIRTH OF VISUAL ARTS IN ARLINGTON

The Arlington Art Association was the first civic organization in the city dedicated to visual arts. The original officers were: Howard Joyner (President), C.C. Myers (First-Vice President) Willard Reavis (Second Vice-President), Mrs. Ruth Stoddard (Third Vice-President), Mrs. Dann (Jean) Gregory (Recording Secretary), Emory Gregory (Corresponding Secretary), Melvin Kiehn (Parliamentarian), and George Shupee (Treasurer). There were 112 charter members of the organization.

Howard Joyner, and his wife Arista, were at the helm of the founding of the organization, but the proposal for a permanent art organization in Arlington was made by Mrs. Mattie Lewis.

Over the 30-year course of the Arlington Art Association, community members from K-12, universities, public service, business, and other sectors and organizations contributed to the AAA and AMA's successes. From the sidewalk art shows in the AAA's early years to AMA fundraisers and exhibitions in the 2000s, leaders, advocates, artists, and volunteers have been at the center of the arts in Arlington and at the heart of the Arlington Museum of Art, including:

Joy Anderson
Bill Barter
Jean Bell
Doreen Bruner
Joe Bruner
Jo Ann Bushhart
Betsy Collier
Pete De Frank
Linda Dipert
Don Gatzke
Diane Gatzke
Irene Glass
Orton Hamby
Dennis Hevia
Beth Hughes
Chap Isham
Harry Kane

Marjorie Kiehn
Kay Kuser
Rose Marie Ladner
Eleanor Grace Martin
James Martin
Max Martin
Lee Matson
Jim Monroe
Bob Musgrove
Kathy Musgrove
Linh Nguyen
Dora Nichols
Virginia O'Connor
Julia Ousley
Kathy Petsche
Grey Pierson
Paula Pierson

Newman Powell
Stephen Rascoe
Dorothy Rencurrel
Marsha Rickett
Jean Smaistrla
Carolyn Snider
Clifton Thorn
Nancy Tice
Ray Tulloh
Tom Vandergriff
Walter Virden

plus Bansy Johnson
and Sue Stevens
for their years of
Arlington arts reporting

LIFE-LONG INSPIRATION

NURTURING THE LOVE OF ART

Arlington Art Association co-founders Howard and Arista Joyner were clear in their vision that visual arts were for everybody. Howard served as the first chair of the art department at North Texas Agricultural College (now UTA) for 32 years. Arista Joyner, also an art instructor at NTAC, went on to set up the art departments at both Arlington High School and Tarrant County (Junior) College.

From the beginning, the Arlington Art Association regularly hosted learning opportunities for all ages and skill levels, including art classes, workshops, lectures, trips, demonstrations, and more.

In 1956, the AAA hosted its first children's art show. Less than ten years later, the AAA was hosting annual student art shows, and by the mid-1970s, the Association's annual shows had become part of the National Art Education Association's Youth Art Month.

In 1990, the Arlington Museum of Art joined forces with Arlington ISD to expand the annual Youth Art Month show. After 33 years, the AMA-AISD Youth Art Month collaboration is going strong, nurturing young talent and inspiring a life-long love of art.

Other educational programs at the AMA inspired by the long-time efforts of the Arlington Art Association are the museum's long-standing Summer Art Camp partnership with AISD, Art+Wine painting party nights, AMA-UTA CreateCollab, high school and college internship programs, and the AMA's Articulate lecture series.

“ *A museum should be a teaching and learning experience, not just a place to show art.*

- Howard Joyner, former AAA President

STRONGER TOGETHER

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Because the AMA was founded as a civic organization, community engagement has always been its pathway to success. The Arlington Art Association worked closely with educators, community groups, business organizations, and city leaders, including Mayor Tom Vandergriff and Arlington Independent School District superintendent James Martin, to ensure a long-lasting commitment to visual arts programming that would grow as the city grew.

During Arlington's economic boom in the 1960s-70s, many visual and performing arts organizations flourished. AAA/AMA collaborations on exhibitions and programs were frequent, especially after Theatre Arlington and Miss Persis Studio of Dance moved just blocks away from the museum on Main Street. Through the years, the AMA's community engagement have included events and programs such as the Main Street Art Xchange camp, Youth Art Month, and the Star of Texas Project.

Today, the Arlington Museum of Art enjoys a myriad of partnerships with a number of organizations including the City of Arlington, AISD, UTA, Downtown Arlington, Greater Arlington Chamber of Commerce, Arlington Convention and Visitors Bureau, and many others.

The museum also seeks to leverage major exhibitions as platforms for discussing important issues and creating meaningful synergies in the community. In 2013, for instance, the AMA came together with numerous organizations during the *Harlem Renaissance* exhibition to host the city's first-ever Juneteenth celebration. In 2021, the AMA once again rallied the community for its second Juneteenth commemorations, which has now become an annual event.

“ *The Association is not a club or social organization as such; rather, it is a civic organization seeking to make Arlington a city of larger opportunities...*

- Arista Joyner, AAA Co-Founder

FROM AAA TO AMA

BUILDING A MUSEUM FROM THE GRASS ROOTS UP

Founders of the Arlington Art Association did not shy away from asking big picture questions. As early as 1954, meeting minutes show that charter members discussed the importance of bringing a visual arts curriculum to the high school and believed that a city of Arlington's size, stature, and civic excellence deserved an art museum. An art museum was not only seen as a powerful measure of a city's prosperity and cultural sophistication but a source of community pride and catalyst for ongoing economic prosperity.

Howard Joyner led the charge, often publishing sharply written letters to the editor or correspondence with city officials. "AAA was to be a place where images of art would be nurtured and expanded; where empathy space would be filled with works for the enjoyment of all through a planned program of the acquisition and hopefully, a museum at some time in the future," writes the AAA of the Howard Joyner Purchase Prize.

In the late 1960s, the City of Arlington announced plans to construct a convention center near the recently built Six Flags Over Texas and Turnpike Stadium. This roused a sense of urgency within AAA leaders to find a permanent home for their growing art collection and programs.

During the 1970s, the AAA hosted auctions to raise funds for acquiring art that could eventually be exhibited in a permanent venue. By the early 1980s, fundraising priorities were refocused to raise seed money for a "visual arts center" or "museum" (those names were used interchangeably for a while).

In 1983, the AAA formed a museum auxiliary group, and through their efforts a variety of sites around town were seriously considered, including a church and some land in Veteran's Park. A town meeting was held on October 23, 1986 at which Arlington Mayor Harold Patterson plus Councilmembers Dottie Lynn and Marti Van Ravensway lent their advocacy for the "quest."



We are by charter a civic organization dedicated to the enlargement of man's vision of himself through the arts..."

- Jim Monroe, Arlington Art Association President, 1967

ART IN THE HEART OF ATX

A PLACE AND SPACE FOR AN ART MUSEUM

Throughout the early 1980s, as it looked for a permanent home, the AAA occupied two temporary office locations in Arlington—723 E. Lamar Boulevard, then an office in Skymark Tower I on North Cooper—which it also used for art shows. St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church on North Davis, as well as other sites, was identified as a potential option but then declared unrealistic due to its poor condition. After a contentious decision in 1986 to pursue the long-abandoned J.C. Penney building in Downtown, six members of the AAA resigned their positions, including Irene Glass and Eleanor Grace Martin.

An agreement with the then-owner of the J.C. Penney building allowed the AAA to take residence in mid-1986 while raising the remaining \$150,000 needed to purchase it by December 31. Bob Musgrove, then-Board President, negotiated a \$100,000 gift for the building while spending the next 60 days raising the remainder, a capital campaign that required raising roughly \$1,150 per day in order to reach the goal.

The building became a more realistic option through the possibility of a joint acquisition agreement with the City. Unfortunately, architects, inspectors, and contractors gave the building mixed reviews: pest control was an issue as were the significant repairs needed on leaky ceilings, flooring, walls, and much more. In spite of it all, Bob Musgrove said, “Since [the acquisition of the building], hundreds of hours have been spent evaluating [it]. The building has been found to be in far better condition than it was originally thought to be.” So with the same roll-up-your-sleeves attitude that had been advancing the AAA since its founding, the members forged ahead.

By 1988, the AAA had moved into the building. By 1990, they had renamed themselves the Arlington Museum of Art, and thanks to extraordinary efforts by long-time member Bill Barter, held its first major exhibition, *Woodworks*, which received critical acclaim.

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

A TEXAS CONTEMPORARY ART STORY

By 1990, the AAA/AMA chose to focus on Texas contemporary art exhibitions to distinguish itself from other visual art organizations in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. The AAA's collection consisted primarily of art in this genre, and it fit the mission of the newly formed Arlington Museum of Art.

With a vision and mission in place, the Board of Directors understood the need for a full-time leader at the helm of the AMA. In June 1989, in a letter to the Board, then-AMA Board President Bill Barter said, "With all due respect to those of us on the board, we have collectively had little experience in today's world of art professionals and museums."

The search for an executive director in 1990 found Joan Davidow. Joan Davidow's reputation as a public radio art critic and contemporary art curator at the Dallas Museum of Art made her a well-known figure statewide and supremely knowledgeable about museum operations.

Davidow's understanding of contemporary art and the AAA/AMA's foundational values of uplifting local artists were very consistent with the choice to focus on Texas contemporary art. However, over her 10-year tenure, the organization faced many challenges: the fast pace of exhibitions, a small pool of artists, and an economic downturn that greatly impacted Downtown Arlington.

In 2001, Anne Allen became the AMA Director, and for six more years she continued to emphasize contemporary art while introducing new programs and community partnerships. In the end, the public's diminished interest in the museum's narrow focus led the AMA's Board of Directors to "broaden the vision" in 2008.

BRIGHT HORIZONS

THE AMA FROM 2012 TO 2023

A restructuring of the Arlington Museum of Art began in 2008 when then-Board Member Chris Hightower was appointed Executive Director. He was empowered by the Board to expand the museum's scope to exhibit internationally known artists and unique traveling collections while maintaining a commitment to legacy programs with proven track records.

Chris developed relationships with local artists, national museums, and international collectors while also identifying new revenue sources to secure a more stable financial position. In 2011, Hightower curated the first non-Texas contemporary art exhibit at the AMA. Since then, the museum has exhibited many world-renowned artists, including:

- *Taylor Swift | The Eras Tour Collection*
- *A Knight's Tale*
- *Disney Art from Private Collections*
- *30 Americans*
- *José Guadalupe Posada: Legendary Printmaker of Mexico*
- *Albrecht Dürer: Master Prints*
- *Vivian Maier: Lost and Found and Vivian Maier: The Color Works*
- *Keith Haring: Against All Odds*
- *Hiroshige, Along the Eastern Road: Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido*
- *Cut! Costume and the Cinema*
- *Salvador Dalí: Visions of Eternity*
- *Milton H. Green: Women*
- *Pablo Picasso: Ceramics*
- *Modern Masters: From the Guild-Hall Collection*
- *Toulouse-Lautrec and the Post Impressionists*
- *Ansel Adams: Masterworks*
- *Women of Baseball*
- *William H. Johnson: An American Modern*
- *Harlem Renaissance: A Celebration of Art & Culture*
- *Frank Lloyd Wright SAMARA: A Mid-Century Dream Home*
- *Rembrandt: An Evolution of Etchings*

Today the Arlington Museum of Art presents internationally-renowned collections and exhibits that attract visitors from all over the world. Because the organization does not have a complete permanent collection, the museum can utilize its entire venue creatively throughout the year for loaned collections, curated exhibits, and all kinds of related activities including exhibit-specific lectures, classes, educational workshops, and diverse cultural programs. The AMA has also stayed true to its roots as an organization dedicated to uplifting local, emerging, and student artists.

“*In the spirit of co-operation, let's all work to achieve a quality of life for all of our citizens worthy of a city of our size and vision. Certainly the visual arts are a part of a well balanced community.*”

- Marsha Rickett, Former AAA President

OUTSIDE THE LINES

2024 AND BEYOND: REIMAGING THE AMA

The Arlington Museum of Art has evolved into a visual arts magnet for our community, North Texans, and visitors from around the world. With this sustained success, the museum rapidly outgrew the “old Penney’s building.” By the mid 2010s, opportunities to host major exhibitions which reflect the diversity of our members, Board, and community were regularly turned down due to space limitations, humidity control, lack of loading dock, security restrictions, ongoing maintenance costs, and other factors.

For us, the way forward is always to honor the dreams of our founders and believe in the possibilities for our future. Back in the 1960s, when the City of Arlington was building the convention center, Arlington Art Association leaders dared to dream that the City and the AAA might someday join forces to bring a world-class art museum to their beloved hometown.

Through unanimous approval of the Arlington City Council in 2023, the AMA has come home to the place originally desired by the AAA founders: the Arlington Expo Center (yes, that same convention center). Phase One renovations to reconfigure the space allowed the AMA to open in its new space in the Arlington Entertainment District on March 30, 2024.

Constantly rotating, forward-thinking immersive and interactive exhibits as well as traditional art exhibits from around the globe are only the beginning of the “outside the lines” world manifesting inside the New AMA. The AMA team has also leveled-up community engagement, kids and adult education programs, Youth Art Month, Summer Art Camp, the Articulate Lecture Series, and more. The much-anticipated Community Gallery provides opportunities for a myriad of local art and other curated shows year-round which will always be free of charge and accessible to all.

As former AAA President Bob Musgrove once said, “I believe it is finally time we move, decisively and without timidity, to do this long overdue task. The next year will be an exciting and challenging time which I personally welcome after so many years of preparation.” We hope you’re excited too.